

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) ~~Process~~A process for the preparation of 2-phenyl ethanol comprising:

subjecting a solution of styrene oxide in an organic solvent to catalytic transfer hydrogenation under stirring conditions, over a heterogeneous transition metal catalyst and in the presence of a hydrogen donor,

wherein the heterogeneous transition metal catalyst contains a metal from the platinum group selected from the group consisting of platinum, palladium, and nickel along with a support,

wherein the support for the catalyst is a saponite clay of the formula $[\text{Na}^+_{(x)}\{\text{M}^{2+}_{(6)}\}\{\text{Si}_{(8-x)}\text{Al}_{(x)}\}\text{O}_{20}(\text{OH})_4]$ wherein M is magnesium or zinc, x is in the range of 0.2 to 2.0,

terminating the reaction, and

separating catalyst and 2-phenyl ethanol.
2. Cancelled.
3. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~A process as in claim 1 wherein concentration of metal in catalyst is in the range of 0.02 – 5.0% (w/w).
4. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~A process as in claim 1 wherein catalyst to styrene oxide ratio is in the range of 1:100 to 1:4000.
- 5-6. Cancelled.

7. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~ A process as in claim 1 wherein the organic solvent used for preparing the solution of styrene oxide comprises an aliphatic alcohol selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol and isopropyl alcohol.

8. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~ A process as in claim 1 wherein hydrogen donor compound is selected from the group consisting of aliphatic alcohol alkali metal and amine esters of fatty acids.

9. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~ A process as in claim 8 wherein the hydrogen donor compound is selected from sodium acetate, ammonium formate, sodium formate and potassium formate.

10. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~ A process as in claim 9 wherein the hydrogen donor compound is selected from ammonium formate and sodium formate.

11. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~ A process as in claim 1 wherein the conversion of styrene oxide is complete and the selectivity to 2-phenyl ethanol is $\geq 99.9\%$ with high TON.

12. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~ A process as in claim 1 wherein use of molecular hydrogen, diethyl ether, ethylene oxide and $AlCl_3$ is avoided.

13. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~ A process as in claim 1 wherein the reaction time is in the range of 1 to 12 hours dependent on the concentration of the metal in the catalyst.

RODE et al.
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14. (Currently Amended) ~~Process according to~~ A process as in claim 1 wherein the reaction is carried out at a temperature in the range of 30-80°C for 1-12 hours.